

**By Simon Roughneen**

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China, however, has long maintained restrictions on freedom of religion, and according to the 2010 Annual Report from the **United States Commission on International Religious Freedom**, “The Chinese government strictly controls all religious practice and represses religious activity outside state-approved organizations.”

For the Chinese government, the need to maintain social stability often means curbing dissent or at least managing it in ways that limit social tensions or animosity toward the state. The rapprochement which has resulted in agreement on the appointment of six bishops could, perhaps, be seen in this light. Father Bernardo Cervellera, a priest of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions who has directed the agency AsiaNews since 2003 and has taught at Beijing University, said Beijing’s accommodating stance is likely due to realizing that “the Chinese faithful is increasingly less likely to accept bishops who do not have Vatican approval.”